



## RESEARCH PROTOCOL FOR THE ALTAR VALLEY WATERSHED

[WWW.ALTARVALLEYCONSERVATION.ORG](http://WWW.ALTARVALLEYCONSERVATION.ORG)

*For more information, please contact Julia Sittig ([Julia@altarvalleyconservation.org](mailto:Julia@altarvalleyconservation.org))*

The Altar Valley Conservation Alliance is a 501 (c) 3 not-for-profit collaborative conservation organization of ranchers and other agriculturalists living and working in the Altar Valley. We work through a strongly collaborative, science-based, community driven and integrated approach to:

- CONSERVE healthy and productive working landscapes, including soil and water conservation, wildfire management, habitat conservation and protection of native species, and other environmental initiatives.
- PROMOTE a thriving agricultural economy by encouraging improved ranching and farming practices, diversification and innovation, and by supporting programs and policies that support more effective, long-term economic development.
- SUSTAIN a resilient rural community by retaining and renewing the cultural and historical traditions of the Altar Valley.

The Alliance believes strong science is an essential part of conservation and land management. With this philosophy, we endeavor to support science that incorporates the assessment and utilization of historic practices and knowledge, evaluates the economic feasibility of management practices, and maintains holistic watershed management as a central concept.

The Alliance's Science Advisory Board has assembled a set of principles to guide interested students, citizen and professional scientists with their work in the Altar Valley. The goal of this list is to guide you through the planning, implementation and wrap-up of scientific endeavors in the Altar Valley. By following these guidelines, you can help enhance the value and success of research activities by encouraging local cooperation and information exchange.

### **Project Planning:**

- Work with **willing** landowners and agencies -- it may take time and effort to gain support.
- Consider topics put forth in the **Altar Valley Watershed Science Agenda** so that you're putting your efforts toward investigating a topic that has value and will add knowledge to the broader community.
- **Seek local input early in your design process to gain community buy-in.** Use resources such as the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance's Science Advisory Board, Board of Directors, and community events.
- Develop a **clear and succinct project description** to share with landowners and partners. This will allow conversations to happen early in the process, and will enable folks to feel comfortable with your

commitment to your project and to be able to seek clarification on questions they might have about your project.

### **Project Implementation:**

- **Notify landowner or leasee** prior to visiting your project site.
- Take the time to be **thorough and clear about permissions and permits**. This will ensure that you are following the appropriate rules and help keep your methods above reproach.
- **Share findings** – Landowners and key agency officials need to be among the first to know of important findings – if your project is sensitive, take the time to design and vet a good process before you start. No one likes to be caught off guard by being the last to know, particularly if it pertains to their own backyard.
- **Make sure you know exactly where you are in the field**, particularly with regard to private land. Even if crossing a boundary is an innocent mistake, it will make folks skeptical of your methods and your integrity if they suspect you're saying one thing and doing another. Ask for help if you need it.
- **Landowners and managers are a valuable asset** – consider using their institutional knowledge as a resource to help you interpret findings along the way. You may learn something very valuable to your project.

### **Project Wrap-up:**

- **Offer the opportunity to review findings** and share the data with participants. The folks on the ground care deeply about learning more about the land they manage. Sharing your finding will help them to benefit from the time they've extended to help you with your project and will help them make informed decisions about management practices.



Overall, **remember that trust takes time to build, and can be lost in a flash**. Respect those who choose not to participate; and never take those who do participate for granted.



In the spirit of collaboration and in an attempt to avoid the duplication of research efforts, please consider keeping the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance apprised of your project. We're happy to assist you in contacting potential landowner participants and sharing information about projects that are already on the ground.

Please contact Julia Sittig, AVCA's Conservation & Science Coordinator with information or questions. She can be reached by e-mail ([julia@altarvalleyconservation.org](mailto:julia@altarvalleyconservation.org)) or phone (412-720-1811).